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Local Food & Farm Initiative Program Outcomes and Impacts, 2011-2014

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Local Food & Farm Initiative Program Outcomes and Impacts, 2011-2014

Abstract
This is an evaluation of seven one-year food system projects funded by the Local Food & Farm Initiative (LFFI). The initiative is funded by an annual appropriation from the Iowa Legislature and administered from the Leopold Center. For every dollar of LFFI investment in these projects, another $17.92 was leveraged by project leaders and their partners.

Keywords
Community-based food systems, Economic and environmental impacts

Disciplines
Agriculture | International and Community Nutrition

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The Local Food & Farm Initiative (LFFI) invested **$36,879** in seven one-year food system projects in 2012 and 2013. For every dollar of LFFI investment, another $17.92 was leveraged by project leaders and their partners, totaling **$660,732** with 89 percent of leveraged funds from the USDA ($587,882). The remainder came from private national funders, local foundations and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project title and end date</th>
<th>LFFI investments</th>
<th>Leveraged funds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting our Potential on-farm mentorship program (July 2012)</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$401,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaling vendor-managed inventory systems to further leverage the competitive advantage of local foods (December 2013)</td>
<td>$9,400</td>
<td>$208,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working to grow more: A community-based approach to food hub development (July 2012)</td>
<td>$1,700</td>
<td>$40,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small farm field and business apprenticeship (October 2013)</td>
<td>$6,824</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School gardens at Kate Mitchell and Sawyer- Ames Elementary Schools (December 2012)</td>
<td>$9,470</td>
<td>$2,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scaling up study (October 2012)</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Faces of Iowa’s farm to school movement (January 2014)</td>
<td>$2,485</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$36,879</strong></td>
<td><strong>$660,732</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PEOPLE REACHED BY LFFI PROJECTS**

LFFI projects impacted Iowans through an educational workshop, on-farm learning, internships, school garden activities and participatory research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (farm to school collaborators, presentation attendees, seasonal workers)</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established farmers</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food buyers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning farmers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMENTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

“The [Wallace Centers of Iowa] apprenticeship gave me a more realistic perspective about the work that is involved in vegetable farming. I was very excited initially to do the work, but was also developing a conviction that this wasn’t something I could do by myself... It informed my decision to find a partner.”

“The grant we [at the Wallace Centers] got from the [LFFI] is moving us to a new level regarding our internships, so it has become more than just a working experience. It really is an apprenticeship.”

“We have a whole series of meetings going on as a result of [the Working to Grow More workshop]. We are in the process of establishing an LLC with our [collaborative marketing] group.”

“The vendor managed inventory system] is cutting edge[... I have high expectations. It’s basically a communication tool, but I think the way and speed we’ll communicate sales data will be key to making [local foods] competitive.”

IMPACTING SCHOOLS AND YOUTH

- 13,750 square feet of garden space was created at two elementary schools in Ames, Iowa.
- Twenty-five Ames elementary teachers are partnering with AmeriCorps members to teach core curriculum using elements from school gardens.
- Seven parents of Ames Elementary students indicated their child has become more involved in buying and eating healthy foods.
- One food service director is sharing her experiences after she participated in creation of the new Farm to School website.

INCORPORATING COMMERCE AND JOB CREATION

- 12 new jobs were created as a result of LFFI investment.
  - Three new full time, year-round jobs were created, including a food hub coordinator and delivery truck driver for the Iowa Food Hub in Decorah, Iowa, and a garden assistant at the Wallace Center in Orion, Iowa.
  - 9 other jobs created include 4 new farm apprentice positions (full-time, temporary), and 5 paid positions for a collaborative marketing farmer team (part-time, temporary).
- 6 aspiring farmers received on-farm training in local food production through two programs: 1) the Wallace Centers of Iowa Small Farm Field and Business Apprenticeship Program and 2) the Women Food & Agriculture Network Harvesting Our Potential Mentorship Program.
- Six farmers in north central Iowa are collaborating to market their products through package deals sold directly to consumers and sales to a grocery store and school. This collaboration resulted from the Working Together to Grow More workshop hosted by Healthy Harvest of North Iowa.
- Two chefs are buying more local food after participating in the food hub workshop.
- One Iowa dairy now guarantees its product with grocers—meaning the grocer doesn’t pay for product that gets outdated—as a result of participating in local foods marketing research conducted through a vendor-managed inventory system project. The dairy is enjoying record sales and continued growth.

RESOURCES DEVELOPED BY LFFI PROJECTS

- Iowa Farm to School website, available at: www.lowafarmtoschool.org
- A Snapshot of Local Food Hub Activity in Iowa, available at: http://www.northiowafood.org/food-hub-resources
- Wallace Centers apprenticeship handbook
- Scaling-Up: Perspectives from Growers and Buyers on Barriers and Benefits to Wholesale Marketing of Local Fruits and Vegetables, available by title: www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs
- Vendor-managed inventory system software

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